

services, and that is exactly the situation Democrats created. They sent too many Federal dollars into the economy, and the economy overheated as a result.

Since Democrats passed their so-called American Rescue Plan, inflation has gone up and up again. In November, inflation hit its highest level in nearly 40 years—40 years—and American families are dealing with the consequences: spikes in food prices, rent prices, utility prices, used car and truck prices, propane, kerosene, and firewood prices, and the list goes on. Inflation is so bad that despite wage growth in 2021, Americans saw a de facto pay cut.

You would think that the economic pain Americans are experiencing would be giving Democrats pause, but in fact, despite massive inflation, Democrats have been trying to double down on the reckless spending strategy that helped cause so much inflation in the first place. Fortunately, they have so far been unable to summon a majority in the Senate to support their latest reckless spending plan, but their unconcern with the dangerous economic consequences of their proposed new spending spree is deeply troubling.

I wish I could say that our inflation crisis was the only Democratic disaster to come out of 2021, but that wouldn't be true. Democrats have also presided over a massive crisis at our southern border—a crisis that Democrats are apparently completely content to ignore. The illegal migration across our southern border picked up in the wake of the President's inauguration and reached stratospheric levels in 2021.

The crisis shows no signs of abating. In November, the latest month for which we have statistics, Customs and Border Protection encountered 173,620 people attempting to cross our southern border illegally. That is well over double the number who tried to cross illegally in November of 2020 and more than four times the number who attempted to cross in November of 2019. But you would never know it from listening to the President or congressional Democrats. It has become very clear that the President doesn't care about what is happening at our southern border despite the very real security and humanitarian crisis that this massive wave of illegal immigration represents.

But our ongoing inflation and border disasters still don't represent the total of Democrats' 2021 failures. There was also the President's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan.

The President's arbitrary, chaotic withdrawal was a real low point for our country. Thirteen of our military men and women died in a terrorist attack during the evacuation of Kabul. We abandoned thousands of individuals who had worked with us in Afghanistan and whom we had promised to protect. They are bracing for life under the brutal control of the Taliban, if they haven't been forced into hiding or met

an even more grim fate. The President also left behind hundreds of American citizens, and the latest report suggests that some of them may still be trying to find a way out of the country.

Meanwhile, the President, who was supposed to restore our standing on the world stage, left our allies wondering if our word could be relied on.

Most of all, the President's disastrous withdrawal has left our country in a more precarious national security position. Afghanistan is well on its way to once again becoming a terrorist haven. But, as with our border crisis, the dangers of our current Afghanistan situation barely seem to register on the President's radar.

I could go on and talk about how the President, who promised to be a President for all Americans, has instead been a President for the far-left wing of the Democratic Party. I could talk about how congressional Democrats, despite holding a razor-thin majority in Congress, have governed in a relentlessly partisan and extreme manner, attempting to force through far-left legislation, including a Federal takeover of election law and perhaps the most radical abortion legislation ever considered in Congress. I could talk about how Democrats are even now plotting to overturn a decades-old Senate rule in an attempt to force their partisan priorities through the Senate. But I will stop this discussion here.

Thanks to Democrats' disasters, 2021 was a very rough year for the country. I would love to think that Democratic governance in 2022 would be better, that Democrats would get serious about inflation, abandon their plans for another reckless spending spree, address our border crisis, and commit to bipartisanship, but given the way things have been going, I am not getting my hopes up.

UKRAINE

Mr. President, before I close, I want to take a moment to comment on the situation in Ukraine.

Tensions remain dangerously high as Russia has amassed a reported 100,000 troops on Ukraine's border. This, of course, is just the latest aggressive move by Russia, which already illegally annexed Crimea in 2014 and has been supporting separatist forces in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine.

It may have been overlooked during the busy holiday season, but I would like to note for the record a bipartisan, bicameral virtual meeting that occurred on the morning of Christmas Eve with Ukrainian President Zelensky. I participated in this meeting, which enabled us to discuss the current security situation directly with President Zelensky.

We discussed the importance of the more than \$2½ billion in security assistance the United States has provided since 2014, including \$300 million in the latest National Defense Authorization Act. But given the urgency of the situation, the Biden administration must consider additional emergency assist-

ance at this critical time, and security assistance must also be backed by strong sanctions to deter any further Russian advances.

Unfortunately, President Biden has already given Russia a pass on one of Vladimir Putin's top priorities: the Nord Stream 2 Pipeline. I have spoken before about the European security risk and economic harm to Ukraine that will be caused by Nord Stream 2. Yet President Biden has not enforced sanctions related to the pipeline—mandatory sanctions, I might add—that are required by law.

Per an agreement made prior to the Christmas break, the Senate will soon have a vote on these sanctions, and the message to Russia and President Putin must be clear: Don't interfere with the aspirations of Ukraine, and let Ukraine determine its future by the will of its people.

This is not a case of the United States and NATO looking to push east; this is a former Soviet state seeking to cast off Russia's grip, assert its sovereignty, and, of its own accord, align itself with the ideals of freedom and embrace peace and prosperity as a free and independent nation.

The United States should stand with Ukraine and against Russia's aggression.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. LUJÁN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

RECESS

Mr. LUJÁN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate recess until 2:15 p.m. to allow for the weekly caucus meetings.

There being no objection, the Senate, at 11:58 a.m., recessed until 2:15 p.m. and reassembled when called to order by the Presiding Officer (Mr. BLUMENTHAL).

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR—Continued

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Hawaii.

ANNIVERSARY OF JANUARY 6

Mr. SCHATZ. Mr. President, a year ago, there was an attempted overthrow of American democracy right here in this building. You know, we spend so much time here arguing about things that are unknowable—about the future, about our ideology, about opinions—that we have become accustomed to treating floor speeches in the Senate as not primarily about facts.

But I was here. And by "I was here," I don't mean I was here in the Capitol. I mean, I was right here at this desk. And so no one needs to characterize it

for me or pontificate about it or tell me what I think happened. I was right here. It wasn't theoretical. It wasn't a debate. It was a physical siege on the U.S. Capitol.

I was already angry that day. The idea that American—American—democratically elected politicians would participate in a process so foul as to be worthy of our most autocratic adversaries had me in a sour mood. The electoral college certification is supposed to be the functional equivalent of a swearing-in. It is where the thing gets made official, but it is not like any decisions are supposed to be made that day. But Senators HAWLEY and CRUZ and others, with their unlimited ambition, their big brains, and their supposed expertise in the Constitution, were dancing on the edge of overturning democracy itself.

But I actually had no idea how bad it was, that there was an ongoing organized conspiracy to steal the election for real, not in a "Russian hacking" kind of a way or not in a "too many of the people I don't agree with voted" kind of way—actually overturning the whole thing.

So no one needs to tell me how to interpret this. I was there when they yelled: "Lock down, lock down." I was here when Mike Pence was ushered off the floor. I was here when CHUCK GRASSLEY and anyone else with a personal protection detail was rushed to safety, and the rest of us were just locked in here and told to stay in our seats.

I was here when Senator TODD YOUNG made himself ready to physically confront the violent traitors. I was here when we were finally moved to an undisclosed location and LINDSEY GRAHAM yelled at the Capitol Police leadership for not having a plan to handle such a moment.

And I was here when Reverend Black pulled us together in unity. And I was here when all but a few of us decided enough is enough, and we were collectively determined to finish our work and finish the count that evening.

We were perilously close to losing everything that night. And some did. Police officers were maimed and killed. Custodial workers and Senate staffers were hiding, with zero protection.

The insurrectionists were explicit. They wanted to kill the Speaker of the House.

One year later should be a simple, solemn commemoration of what happened and a collective, unified determination to never let anything like that ever happen again.

But I am even more worried now because that moment of unity is gone, and, most importantly, that moment of moral clarity of collective, patriotic outrage is fading. It went from Republicans being apologetic about their President to voting to exonerate him. It went from Republicans being angry at him and denouncing him to voting against putting a bipartisan commission together to get all of the facts out.

It went from 99 percent of the public being crystal clear about the moral threat to the right rewriting history and, in some cases, the left going along with it by telling us that some issues poll better.

To be clear, the litmus test for both political parties is, to greater or lesser degrees, the extent to which one is loyal to the President—fair enough. That is how the modern two-party system works, for better or worse.

But Donald Trump is now defining fealty to him by one thing and one thing only: Are you willing to install him into power regardless of the vote count?

And so now every Republican politician and elected official—secretaries of state, county election commissioners, U.S. Senate candidates—have to promise to put Trump above democracy itself. And many are doing it. They are now organizing the next coup in plain sight.

Now, I don't know the economics or the psychology behind it. Maybe, it is ratings. Maybe, it is just the natural tendency among the chattering class to not want to sound too wild-eyed—that being unworried is what passes for savvy in this town. But everyone, including those who consider themselves patriots, seem so chill about what is going on that I am genuinely alarmed. They are installing loyalists across the country in order to cheat, and they are not being subtle about it.

Meanwhile, the cocktail set in Washington is busy policing our tone and talking about Democratic overreach, and so the defining question this week and this year is this: Are we willing to face the challenge in front of us?

Yes, there is COVID. Yes, there is climate. But democracy itself is at risk in a way that we haven't seen in centuries, and we are standing around as a country arguing about mostly nonsense.

And I think here is the problem for all of us, and here is why this is so hard emotionally: If we take a moment to realize what is at stake, we might realize what is required. It will require Republicans to stand up to an autocrat. It will require Democrats to stop arguing amongst themselves. It will require reporters to write stories that get fewer clicks than whatever BS is driving the news of the day. It will require citizens to understand that democracy in this country is not what we have. It is what we do, and it is never guaranteed.

So, this week, we commemorate the fallen. We thank everyone who came to democracy's defense across the country and in our great Capital City. But we know that this was round 1. We know that authoritarians rarely give up, and we know that they aren't doing their preparation for the next coup in hiding. They are doing it all in plain sight, and they must be stopped.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Nevada.

REMEMBERING HARRY REID

Ms. CORTEZ MASTO. Mr. President, today, I rise to pay tribute to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, a champion for Nevada. He was one of the most powerful, dedicated, and effective advocates that my home State has ever seen. He worked for the benefit of Nevadans for almost 50 years in both State and national politics. Everyone living in the Silver State today has benefited from his wise and tenacious efforts.

But before Harry Reid was my Senator and the Senator for the State of Nevada, he was a neighbor to my family. He was a mentor and a friend.

Now, I grew up in Las Vegas, just down the street from the Reid family, and my sister and I attended public school with their oldest son, Rory. And the entire Cortez family and Masto family and I want to send our condolences to his beautiful wife Landra; his children, Lana Reid Barringer, Rory, Leif, Josh, and Key; and his 19 grandchildren and his great-grandchildren.

Harry Reid was irreplaceable, not just to them but to so many people, including me and many of my colleagues in this Chamber. He was unfailingly supportive of me throughout my entire time in public service.

You know, I remember when I first decided to run for the office of Nevada's attorney general. One of the first people I called was Senator Reid, and I asked him for advice. I asked him for advice on running for office because it was the first time I had ever run for any type of office, and I had chosen to take on a statewide campaign. Not only was he supportive, but he was candid in his comments—as only Harry can be—about campaigning, the types of individuals working in the campaign world, and what to beware of, of those working in that campaign world. His advice still rings true today.

When I was serving, and fortunate enough to be elected statewide as the attorney general, Senator Reid was always available for a call. And he never forgot about Nevada and working with everybody in Nevada from his seat here as a majority leader.

I remember one time, as the attorney general, I got a call from a Senator here in the U.S. Senate, and the Senator said to me: I was just talking to Senator Reid, and there is an issue that came up that I would like to focus on, but Senator Reid said: You better call my attorney general first in Nevada to make sure that she and the State of Nevada are supportive of it. And to this day, I now serve with that Senator. I will never forget getting a call from a U.S. Senator, as a sitting attorney general, to talk about an issue that was important for Nevada because Senator Reid knew what was important for him and his State.

He also had this uncanny ability to call you at just the right time, when you needed support or encouragement, when you needed advice or just someone to commiserate with. We all know